

## Elder Ministry at Calvary

**Thesis:** Today, we have the privilege of commissioning three new elders at Calvary. In light of that opportunity, I want to share with you some of our vision and values regarding leadership at Calvary. And, I want to celebrate different ones who help Calvary to be a healthy body and a beautiful bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Text:** Acts 14:23

1. **It is my personal blessing of serving as senior pastor of this church, this family.**
  - a. Calvary, I am so blessed to be a part of you.
  - b. You are an amazing community of faith.
  - c. Calvary, thank you for your support, encouragement, and love. Thank you for your prayers. Thank you for your partnership. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for your hunger for God. Thank you for partnering with Jesus and others on Christ's mission locally and globally.
2. **It is my joy to collaborate with such great teams at Calvary.**
  - a. We have a wonderful and joy-filled **Staff Team**. I am so blessed to work with an amazing team of men and women on our staff.
    - i. Steve Meeks, Joshua Rushing, Margaret Petry, Becky Gressett, Jane Winne, Cheryl Moses, and Marcella Rudio.
  - b. I am grateful for our **Elder Team**. These men partner with me and our ministry staff through their service, prayer, and wise counsel.
    - i. Thanks to Steve Buckles, Russ Gressett, Martin Jordana, Steve Meeks, Doug Meriwether, Keith Ressler, and Joshua Rushing.
    - ii. And, many thanks to Jay Kelley and Gary Busch who have served faithfully and are rotating off our elder team.
  - c. I am so grateful for the men and women who are serve on our **Deacon Team**.
    - i. These people are true servants and shining examples in the body of Christ here.
    - ii. Shannon Birdwell, Jim Edwards, Al Nash, Evelyn Owens, Tom Petry, Jane Winne, and Magan Yarbrough.
  - d. **Various teams:** I am so proud of our Small Group / Journey Group leaders and co-leaders, Children's Ministry Team, Student Ministry Council, Worship Team, Intercessory Prayer Teams, Ladies Ministry Council, and other key volunteer teams (Welcome Center, Greeters/Ushers, First Responders, Prayer Room Leadership team, etc.).  
**Volunteers make Calvary who we are and do incredible works of service.**  
Thanks to every volunteer for your service and partnership.

- e. And, we have a great **Kid Care Team**, led by Patti Ressler, and we have amazing and faithful **Kid Care workers**.
3. **Church leadership structures and the Bible.**
- a. God did not give us a blueprint for church structures, government, polity, services, and ministries. I often hear people say, “We need to go back to the first century church.” And I ask the question: “Which one?” Each church was different and unique in its context, structure, and assignment.
  - b. The good news is that God has placed Jesus as the head of his church.
  - c. Instead of a blueprint, the Lord has given us principles and practices for loving God, for doing life together, for being the church, for loving and serving one another, for ministering together to the Lord and to others, and for partnering with Jesus on his mission—together with others.
    - i. Like Team Ministry (Acts 6:1-7; 13:1-3; Ephesians 4:11-13).
    - ii. Like our commission to love God and others, and to raise up followers of Jesus (Matthew 22:73-40; 28:18-20).
    - iii. Like the different roles, gifts, ministries, and offices identified in Scripture (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12 – 14; Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-7; et al.).
    - iv. Like how to do life together in the body of Christ (see the *One Anothers* of the New Testament).
4. **Our vision as a church has captured my heart and life.**
- a. **I love our vision of intimacy, community, and kingdom.**
    - i. I believe that our vision is actually a mental model of transformation. The Lord uses all three parts of our vision as a way to transform our lives.
    - ii. Together, we have been learning and practicing skills and concepts that take our vision to new levels of intentionality.
  - b. **Our vision:**
    - i. To establish people in INTIMACY with God — My Story; we want to increase our capacity for **awareness**.
    - ii. To express true Christian COMMUNITY — Our Story; we want to increase our capacity for **authenticity** (being open and honest).
    - iii. To extend the KINGDOM of God in the Earth — The Story; we want to increase our capacity for **alignment** with the ways of Jesus.
    - iv. **Intimacy:** a reflective life that leads to intimate relationship with God, conformity to Christ, and co-creating with God.
      - 1. How can I do what Jesus would do unless I practice like he did? Not by trying but by training and practice.
      - 2. John 15:5, 17:3; Ephesians 1:17; Romans 8:28-29; Matthew 6:10.

- v. **Community:** an authentic community where we are open and honest, and we have a shared life and a shared vision with others.
  - 1. 1 John 1:7; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Corinthians 12:12fl.
- vi. **Kingdom:** radically obeying the Lord and aligning with the ways of Jesus; partnering with Jesus on his mission with others in our spheres of influence locally and globally.
  - 1. The finish line: Matthew 24:12-14.
  - 2. The context: Isaiah 60:1-3.
  - 3. The community on mission: Luke 9:1-2, 10:1-2; Acts 1:8.

c. **Where we are going:**

- i. To an intimate relationship with God (John 17:3) that results in conformity to the nature of Christ (Romans 8:28-29) and in co-creating with God (Matthew 6:10; Revelation 5:9-10).
- ii. To an authentic community (walking in the light with God and others, 1 John 1:7) that experiences the unity of the faith, intimacy with the Son of God, and the maturity (the full measure of the stature) of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-13).
- iii. To living missionally (on the King's mission) with others which involves partnering with the Lord Jesus as kings and priests to put the world back together as God intended (Revelation 5:9-10).
  - 1. Serving the poor, the marginalized, and those in need
  - 2. Working for the common good
  - 3. Restoring individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design

5. **In our teams, we practice the skill of authenticity.**

- a. We are not here just to get tasks done.
  - i. All of our teams embody our vision.
  - ii. Our teams are not just committees; they are communities where we are learning to partner with Jesus and with one another on Christ's mission.
- b. For example, let me share with you how we express authentic community in our teams.
  - i. Remember that expressing true Christian community is a part of our vision.
  - ii. That means that we have to grow in our competency for authenticity, being open and honest with one another.
  - iii. And remember that authenticity is part of the mental model of transformation. It is one of the primary ways God uses to change us.
- c. In all of our teams which I lead, we build in time to connect with one another and to practice authenticity.

- i. **We spend the first part of our meetings sharing our lives with one another intentionally.**
    1. **Check in questions:** Answer one or two of the following questions. What are you celebrating? What are you learning? What challenge(s) are you facing? What transformation are you currently working on? Where are you stuck or stopped? What do you need to say? Etc.
    2. **We help this process of authenticity by asking check in questions or by using other ways to share our lives with one another.**
  - ii. We also build in times for **praying for one another.**
6. **Another skill which our teams practice is the skill of differentiation of self.**
- a. Differentiation of self is growing in our capacity to individuate and to stay connected.
  - b. What does that look like practically?
    - i. In the teams, families, or missionally communities of which I am apart, I share what I think, feel, and believe with gentleness and respect.
    - ii. I encourage others share what they think, feel, and believe.
    - iii. And, I choose to stay connected with others, no matter what they think, feel, and believe.
7. **An important skill that we use in our teams is discerning the voice of the Spirit through dialogue.**
- a. Illustrations: Acts 15:1-35 (Council at Jerusalem) and Acts 16:6-10 (Processing the vision of the Lord to go to Europe).
    - i. *Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. 7 When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. 8 So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. 9 During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them (Acts 16:6-10).*
  - b. Discerning the voice of the Spirit through dialogue (not debate, but open, honest sharing) is one of the most frequent ways which the Lord speaks to me.
8. *Elder Ministry: Vision and Values.*
- a. Let's look together that the handout which describes our Elder Ministry at Calvary.

- b. Please take the time to read over this document on your own.
  - c. I want to highlight a few things mentioned in the document.
9. **Commissioning:** what it means for us at Calvary.
- a. **Commissioning:** **We as leaders and as the body of Christ** confirm the calling of the Lord and release people to the assignments to which the Lord is calling them.
    - i. We affirm, bless, and release people to what the Lord is saying and doing in and through their lives.
    - ii. We lay hands on them, pray for them, and release gifts, anointing, favor, and wisdom to them in the Spirit of Christ.
  - b. *In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them (Acts 6:1–6).*
  - c. *In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch) and Saul. 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off (Acts 13:1-3).*
  - d. *Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust (Act 14:23).*
  - e. *Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you (1 Timothy 4:14).*
  - f. *For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. 7 For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:6-7).*

**Summary:**

Today, we have the privilege of commissioning three new elders at Calvary. In light of that opportunity, I have shared with you some of our vision and values regarding leadership at Calvary. And, I wanted to take time to celebrate different ones who help Calvary to be a healthy body and a beautiful bride for the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Action: commission our new elders.**

**Ministry Time:**

# ELDER MINISTRY: VALUES AND VISION

## The Role of Calvary's Elders

1. Working with the senior pastor and ministry staff, the elders serve in affirming the vision of the church. (2 Thess. 1:11-12)
  - a. Promoting the goals, serving, supporting, and advocating for Calvary's vision.
  - b. Helping the church staff to evaluate the progress and achievement of Calvary's vision.
2. Protecting the church from all the *"schemes of the devil,"* striving to maintain *"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,"* and working to create harmony among all the people.
  - a. The elders will work to promote authentic love between the pastors, ministry staff, and members of Calvary Community Church.
  - b. See: Acts 20:25-31; Eph. 4:1-3, 15-16; Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Jn. 4:11-12.
3. Helping to promote Calvary's health by being an excellent example and role model of righteousness, peace, and joy. (Rom. 14:17)
4. Serving in the ministries of the church according to their own giftedness and calling. (1 Pet. 4:10)
5. Serving in the role of advisory council to the senior pastor.

## The Function of the Elders

1. Remaining steadfast in the Scripture and prayer as an aid to hearing the Spirit's voice and calling. (Acts 13:1-3)
2. Communicating and promoting the goals and objectives which support Calvary's vision for intimacy, community, and kingdom.
3. Serving as discerning partners with the senior pastor and ministry staff in considering Calvary's response to the political, social, and community issues of our time.
4. Caring for the needs of the church—both spiritual and physical. Being diligent in prayer for the needs of the church body. (Col. 1:9-12)

### **What do we value as an elder team?**

1. We value the presence of God.
2. We value people hearing God's voice.
3. We value worship, prayer, the ministry of the Holy Spirit and Scripture as avenues of God's presence, love, wisdom, and power.
4. We value the creative tension between Word and Spirit.
5. We value faith community and the deepening of love it requires.
6. We value members using their giftedness in ministry.
7. We value love.
8. We value the prophetic.
9. We value intimacy, community, and kingdom.

### **What commitments are required from members of our elder team?**

1. Integrity
2. Authenticity / vulnerability
3. Courage
4. Commitment to love one another as Christ loves us
5. Confidentiality
6. Respect
7. Walking in the light and dispelling offenses (1 Jn 1:7)
8. Earnest pursuit of unity (Eph. 4:1-3)
9. Prayer, both individually and corporately
10. Zeal for God's house and his purposes
11. Missional living—joining Jesus on his mission, in our spheres of influence both locally and globally
12. Sacrificial lifestyle
13. Maintaining love for one another is more important than being right
14. *Truthing in love* (Eph. 4:15)
15. *"All in"* relationships for one another and for God's purposes

### **What is the role of the elder team in relation to the senior pastor?**

1. The elders seek to support the senior pastor as called by God to be the primary vision setter for the church. The elders provide this support to the senior pastor through prayer and wise counsel.

- a. The elders help to shoulder the burden of the senior pastor by serving as prayer warriors, forming a spiritual defense for both the pastors and the people of Calvary.
  - b. The elders serve as an advisory council for the senior pastor, providing him with wisdom, diverse viewpoints, and broader support for major initiatives.
2. The elders also serve the senior pastor through their encouragement, their faith, and their love.
  3. Their support of the senior pastor is also seen in their authentic partnership, camaraderie, and interdependence.
  4. While elders contribute to the vision and its implementation, they recognize that the process for setting the agenda and defining the vision most commonly resides with the senior pastor.
    - a. Elders come alongside the senior pastor and work with him to process and discern emerging vision.
    - b. (See Acts 16 concerning the *Macedonian call*; "Paul's team *concluded*" the vision was truly God's call for them. At that point, they turned to being advocates and catalysts of that vision.)

### **What is the role of the elder team in relation to the ministry staff?**

1. In supporting the ministry staff, elders will offer wise guidance, genuine love, and sincere prayer.
2. Protection for the ministry staff falls under the prayer assignment for the elders. Ministry staff is often the target of Satan's attack. Ministry leadership also places the ministry staff in vulnerable places where misunderstanding occurs and it is the prayer and support of the elder's that both protect and encourage our ministry staff.
3. Elders also serve the ministry staff through advocating for Calvary's vision, serving the vision, and helping the church to stay aligned with our vision and calling.

## How are decisions made?

The elders serve as an advisory council for the senior pastor helping to discern and process emerging vision. They also work to advise in important decision-making and problem-solving. There will always be situations and circumstances arising within the church and the world that will require decisions to be made. The elder team serves the senior pastor in helping to discern God's will and way forward. This process is based in these guiding principles:

- UNANIMITY:** We will always seek unanimity. Complete unity and agreement in any process is always best. We will aim for the best. Our **guiding principle:** EPHESIANS 4:3 "MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO KEEP THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT..."
- CONSENSUS:** Sometimes decisions must be made with less than complete agreement. While there will be decisions made without everyone's agreement, we will not allow disagreement to divide us. Consensus for us means that most of the elder team is in agreement on some issue, but there may be some who see things differently. Disagreement is not seen as disunity. All viewpoints are to be respected and heard. After an agreement is reached by consensus, all elders still honor, support, and serve this decision because of our trust and love for one another and our confidence in the Lord's leadership of our church family. Our **guiding principle:** EPHESIANS 4:3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit THROUGH THE BOND OF PEACE."
- TRUSTED HEADSHIP:** There may be times when a decision cannot be delayed due to circumstances. Someone must decide. If consensus cannot be reached, the team will humbly submit the decision into the prayer closet while allowing the senior pastor to make the final decision that is at hand. We are comfortable in this process because of the trust and love we have for one another and our reliance on the Holy Spirit to speak. We embrace and believe that *the process is the product*. Our **guiding principle:** EPHESIANS 5:21 "SUBMIT TO ONE ANOTHER OUT OF REVERENCE FOR CHRIST." HEBREWS 13:17 HAVE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR LEADERS AND SUBMIT TO THEIR AUTHORITY, BECAUSE THEY KEEP WATCH OVER YOU AS THOSE WHO MUST GIVE AN ACCOUNT.